

*Willy Virginia Murray*

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BETTER LATE THAN NEVER,

&c.

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Better Late than Never:

OR

Considerations

UPON THE

CONDUCT OF THE WAR;

AND THE

EXPEDIENCY OF MAKING PEACE

WITH

FRANCE.

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Justum est bellum quibus necessarium; et pia arma, quibus nulla  
nisi in armis relinquitur spes. LIVIVS IX.

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## CONSIDERATIONS,

&c.

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NOTHING is more common than even for men of sense and education to talk of the impossibility of *ever* making peace with Bonaparte. Impossible even to make peace? What a sweeping sentence of universal devastation! Are hostilities then to be entailed on this devoted country from generation to generation? Are all avenues towards approximation to be for ever closed; and all intercourse interdicted with a nation, where science, and genius, and all the amiable talents, which form the charm and ornament of social life, were wont to flourish in an eminent degree? God forbid that such a state of things should ever exist in the civilised world! It cannot exist. The fiends of plunder may cry for blood, but the rights of humanity must ultimately be vindicated; and the sword of destruction be sheathed. So far from admitting the impracticability of ever making peace with Bonaparte, I will venture boldly

to reverse the proposition, and affirm that it is impossible to make war with him for ever.

To speculate on the illness of this extraordinary man, who conquers an empire before most other generals would have captured a town; and to anticipate the revolutions which might be occasioned by his death, would at best prove an unprofitable labour; but to examine what means may be most likely to restrain his overwhelming career, by directing his ambition towards a less dangerous channel, is a subject most worthy of the attention of all, whose hearts are alive to the feelings of patriotism.

Before we subscribe to a sentence of incessant hostility, it might be prudent to consider for what objects we are now contending, and what probability there is of our ever obtaining them. And this enquiry becomes the more necessary, because since the commencement of the contest with revolutionary France, the first has never been clearly defined, but has incessantly varied with the hopes and expectations of those, who unfortunately for mankind were entrusted with the conduct of affairs. At one period we were fighting for the destruction of Jacobinism, at another for the restoration of the Bourbons. "Indemnity for the past, and security for the future" was the popular theme to which the minister resorted, when the tide of war rolled in favour of the



allies ; but when the artillery of the enemy had rendered abortive the fallacious promises with which he pampered the credulity of the nation, his tone was lowered, and we were waging war from compulsion alone, as the only possible means of protecting our religion, our property, and our constitution, against the machinations of a deadly and inveterate foe.

There was a man indeed, and one man only, whose intuitive glance dived into futurity. With a precision all but prophetic, he predicted the calamities which must result from a coalition, where pride and anger, interest and ambition were the impellent principles. He knew that from the petty jealousies of the continental rulers, and the profligate venality of their ministers, disgrace and ruin must inevitably ensue. He saw that the felly of attempting to starve twenty-five millions of people with arms in their hands, was almost equal to the iniquity of the plan. He explained the absurdity of presuming to calculate the resources of a nation exasperated by oppression and indignant of controul, by the mercantile barometer of funds and loans ; or of predicting their ruin from the depreciation of their paper currency, or the extinction of their commerce. But his warning voice was either heard with indifference, like that of Cassandra, or stigmatized by men incapable of

understanding the depth of his arguments, as the factious cry of a designing demagogue.

There are few questions concerning which a greater variety of opinions has prevailed, than respecting the origin of the war. By one party it is attributed to the overbearing ambition of France; by the other it is supposed to have arisen from the mercantile policy of England. To examine the subject under all its bearings would lead me away from my present object, and could answer no laudable purpose. Thus much, however, I will venture to say without fear of contradiction; that it was the general wish of the French nation to have continued to live on pacific terms with a country, whose constitution and spirit they admired. "*Paix avec l'Angleterre, et guerre avec le reste de l'Europe,*" was the common cry in the streets of Paris. This, I believe, to be accurately true. Neither is it less so, that the conduct of the English cabinet was calculated rather to kindle, than to extinguish the flame. Whether it might have been possible, or not, to have avoided a rupture, can now be only matter of speculation. But tremendous indeed must be the responsibility of those from whose passions, or prejudices it arose. It is not alone at the tribunal of posterity where they must answer for the blood which has been wantonly shed. There is another, and far



more equitable, Judge, before whom they must one day appear, to render up the awful account of devastation and plunder, unpalliated by the arts of sophistry, undisguised by the intrigues of party!

Neither is it my intention to enter into a minute detail respecting the conduct of a war, professedly undertaken in defence of religion, morality, and justice, and in the prosecution of which every principle of justice, morality, and religion, has been unblushingly sacrificed at the shrine of interest and ambition. The errors and misfortunes of the last eighteen years, may in future ages afford an awful lesson to posterity, and teach them the folly of attempting to subjugate, a people determined to be free. Never were presumption and incapacity so fully exemplified in the misery of nations, as they have been by the members of the different coalitions, assembled apparently for the destruction of France, but whose ill-directed efforts have eventually enabled her to dictate laws to the whole continent of Europe. The blunders committed both by those who planned, and those who conducted the campaigns, so far exceed the bounds of human imbecility, as almost to excite a suspicion that, in order to consummate some important scheme too deep and intricate for the contracted powers of mortal intellect to penetrate, Providence has blinded all the princes of

Europe, as she did the Egyptian Pharaoh, and rendered them insensible even to the impressive dictates of personal calamity. Though engaged in a contest, the event of which was destined to decide whether they should continue to reign with independant authority, or hold a precarious sceptre like the tributary kings of Asia Minor, under the proud dominion of a master, the infatuated sovereigns of Austria and Prussia were unable so far to conquer their hereditary jealousies, as heartily to unite for their mutual defence. The acquisition of a barren bailiwick, or even a miserable village, by either of these rival powers, without an adequate compensation, of poverty and sterility to the other, would have created almost as much alarm at Vienna or Berlin, as if the capital had been invested by the armies of France. Jealous in the extreme of each other, they beheld the gigantic strides of the common enemy with an indifference bordering on insensibility. This want of harmony was so clearly manifested in the first campaign,\* that it required no extraordinary portion of sagacity to foresee, that they would both be ready to abandon the cause, when any private emolument should accrue from the sacrifice.

To this contemptible policy of calculation and interest all the subsequent misfortunes may be ascribed. Instead of being a league of confidence and unanimity, it proved a league of suspicion and treachery. Even England herself, whether intentionally or not it is in vain to enquire, contributed to increase the universal delusion. The rapid progress of general Pichegru was in great measure occasioned by a deficiency in the troops to be provided by England. I have been assured by a confidential friend of General Mack, that the plan of attack for 1794 was formed on the supposition of a much larger force than was actually brought into the field. In the winter preceding that disastrous campaign, General Mack came over to this country, that he might ascertain with precision to what extent the British subsidies were to be employed. I do not recollect the exact numbers promised by the English minister, but I understood them to have been greatly exaggerated; even the Dutch, over whom the government of this country might be supposed to have exercised a salutary control, were deficient by several thousands, while the Prussians (as General Mack suspected, on account of their neglect in collecting magazines) never advanced to the theatre of war. Misled by the assurances of Mr. Pitt, the Austrians took a line too extensive to be



defended by the force which was actually at their disposal, but which would have presented an impenetrable barrier to the enemy, had the promises of England been fulfilled. The French availed themselves of this error with their usual dexterity, and both Belgium and Holland were irrecoverably lost.

This infamous duplicity on the part of Prussia, was so far systematized by the late king, that it formed the characteristic feature of his government. At the very moment when the court of Berlin had entered into a treaty with this country to furnish auxiliary troops at an enormous expense, he was negotiating with France for the express purpose of rendering his succours useless. For though the conferences at Frankfort between general Kalkreuth and the commissioners deputed by the National Convention, were ostensibly confined to the exchange of prisoners, no doubt is entertained by those, whose situations enabled them to form a correct judgment, that they tended directly to the restoration of peace. The high consideration in which general Kalkreuth is held by the Prussian army, was alone sufficient to excite a suspicion by no means favourable to the integrity of his master; since it was difficult to believe that such a man would have been employed on any mission, unless the most important interests were at stake. It would

however have been deviating most essentially from that code of profligacy, which seems to have been considered by the cabinet of Berlin as the perfection of political wisdom, had they honestly avowed their intention ; because such a confession must infallibly have deprived them of the subsidies which they expected from the prodigality of Britain, and which they resolved to pocket, without a single effort to deserve. This, too, was become an easy task, since with a credulity unparalleled in diplomatic history, the English minister consented that the Prussian army, though paid by this country, at an extravagant rate, should remain entirely under the control of a Prussian commander.

Were not these facts authenticated by public documents, they would exceed the bounds of credibility. Neither is it easy to decide which most deserves censure, the perfidy of the Prussians in accepting payment for services which they never meant to perform ; or the folly of the English in lavishing treasures, which, from the construction of the treaty, could not possibly be productive of the smallest advantage.

In the following spring the coalition received a fatal blow by the conclusion of a peace between Prussia and France ; this forms a memorable epoch in the war, because the atheistical republic was no longer excluded from the



rank of nations, as unable to maintain the accustomed relations of amity, but was formally acknowledged by one of the leading powers of the hostile league, as an essential member of the christian commonwealth.

The example set by the venality of Berlin was soon followed by the timidity of Spain. A Bourbon prince was the second sovereign who condescended to receive the fraternal embrace from the murderers of a Bourbon.

This, surely, was sufficient to have displayed the absurdity of coalitions, and to have convinced the world that republican France was not the only country from which probity and honour were banished. But the eloquence of Mr. Burke had inflamed the nation to such a degree, that no schemes were rejected, however extravagant, which aimed at the extirpation of Jacobinism. The conduct of this country at that momentous crisis, may possibly be attributed by some future historian to the effect of a new disease, which may be discriminated by the name of the *Burkeian mania*, and described in the following words: “ At  
“ the close of the eighteenth century, an un-  
“ known malady broke out in England, which  
“ proved full as contagious as the sweating  
“ sickness, or the plague. The characteristic  
“ of this distemper was fear, and its principal  
“ seat was the brain. Every object, which

“ presented itself to the disordered imagina-  
 “ tion, assumed a terrific form. It was amid  
 “ the wreck of thrones and altars that the  
 “ patient wandered in idea. In the paroxism  
 “ of his fever he waged war against every  
 “ thing that came in his way, pelting all who  
 “ opposed him with gold. At the bare mention  
 “ of peace he was seized with convulsions,  
 “ like a person attacked with a hydrophobia  
 “ at the sight of water.”

The enthusiasm of the people unfortunately  
 kept pace with the Quixotism of the minister,  
 and I firmly believe there are few men in the na-  
 tion, who havenot applauded the frantic project  
 of marching to Paris, and hanging the National  
 Convention. It will be no easy task, however,  
 to persuade posterity, that at a period of the  
 world the most enlightened, all persons who pre-  
 sumed to exercise the faculties of reason, and to  
 question the policy of confiding implicitly in the  
 exertions of those who refused to defend their  
 own possessions without a bribe from England,  
 were stigmatized with the opprobrious epithet  
 of Jacobins ; that every one was shunned  
 as an enemy both to God and man, who ven-  
 tured to suggest that better methods might be  
 devised to secure the affections of a loyal peo-  
 ple, than to overwhelm them with taxes suffi-  
 cient to abridge every comfort of life, and then  
 by unconstitutional bills to deprive them of their

only remaining consolation, that of uttering their complaints with freedom.

Though little could be expected from the bravest troops, commanded by such generals as Coburg, Wurmser, and Beaulieu, yet so great was the ardor for war, that by the prodigality of our offers, we tempted Austria to persevere in the contest, till the victories of Bonaparte made her seriously tremble for her capital. The convention of Leoben left us destitute of an ally, singly to contend against the gigantic resources of France. The armistice concluded between Archduke Charles and the conqueror of Italy, proved, as I have been assured by credible authority, an unexpected blow to the British ministry, though circumstances had occurred, which, independently of the weakness of the Austrian army, might in some measure have prepared them for the event. If I am not greatly mistaken, information was transmitted to the secretary of state for foreign affairs, of a meeting which took place at Bologna, a few weeks previous to the termination of hostilities. Upon Bonaparte's return from Tolentino, where he dictated peace to the affrighted Pontiff, he was met at Bologna by Marquis Luchisini, the favourite negociator of Prussia; and Marquis Manfredini, the confidential friend of the grand duke of Tuscany. During several hours they were

shut up together in close debate, and the subject was regarded to be of so much importance, that General Berthier was stationed, during the whole of their conference, in an anti-chamber adjoining to the room in which they conversed, to prevent any intruder from approaching the door. It is difficult to attribute the assemblage of such distinguished statesmen to accident alone; and if we believe it intentional, it is almost equally so, to suppose that it could have any object in view, but to smooth the obstacles which existed in the way of a negotiation, and this latter opinion was still further confirmed by the character and principles of the Florentine minister, who was generally known to be a decided advocate for peace.

Previously, however, to this calamitous period, the British ministry had been induced by the debility of Austria, but more so perhaps by the wish of establishing a permanent system of finance, to open a negotiation with the French directory. The result of Lord Malmesbury's mission to Paris, so ably described by his own pen, may serve to establish, beyond the possibility of a doubt, what it is my principal object to shew; viz. that *our means of negotiating were progressively deteriorated by every campaign, with the single exception of the year 1799, when we refused to avail ourselves of our advantages.*



In the triumphant situation to which France was raised by the genius of Bonaparte, no rational hope could have been cherished even by the most sanguine, that she would ever consent to relinquish Belgium, while she possessed the power to retain it. So long as the Netherlands remained in the hands of Austria, her northern frontier was insecure; but with the Scheld and Rhine for her boundaries, she had nothing serious to apprehend. Yet Lord Malmesbury declared in peremptory terms to M. Delacroix, that "this was a point on which he must entertain no expectation that his Majesty would relax, or ever consent to see the Netherlands remain a part of France."

The restitution of Belgium was therefore made a *sine qua non* in the treaty, and the refusal to accept of any equivalent occasioned the rupture of the negotiation. The lofty tone in which the British Plenipotentiary persisted in a demand, with which it was highly improbable that a victorious nation should comply, and to which they could not have acceded without degrading themselves in the eyes of the world, was calculated to inspire a general belief that the English minister was not at that time sincere in his wishes for peace, but that the mission to Paris was intended solely to rekindle a spirit, which visibly began to decline.



It was highly probable from the laconic style affectedly employed by the Republican Government in all political intercourse, that something might occur in the course of the negotiation, offensive to the pride of an Englishman, and inflame his resentment to such a pitch, that he would support with patience the most intolerable burthens, in the hope of speedy revenge.

But if this attempt to negotiate was merely illusory, various circumstances occurred during the following spring, which seem to have inspired a serious desire for peace. The precarious state of the public credit, the stoppage of payment in specie at the Bank, but above all the alarming mutiny which broke out in the fleet, were events of a nature to awaken the most serious apprehensions in every bosom, not totally callous to the dictates of prudence. The treaty of Lille was accordingly conducted, on the part of Great Britain, with a degree of candor and moderation which probably would have led to an amicable termination, had they been met by the enemy with sentiments equally pacific. By comparing the *projet* presented by Lord Malmesbury, in July 1797, with the demands which he made in December 1796, we shall be enabled to form a pretty accurate estimate of the folly of breaking off the treaty of Paris on account of an object, which we now were ready to

abandon without any equivalent, but in return for which we might have before obtained concessions of infinite value. The language of the Directory from the very beginning was that of conquest, and not of conciliation; but after the fall of Carnot and Barthelemy, the only members of the executive government who had the smallest pretensions to talent or honesty, the new plenipotentiaries assumed a tone of insolence, which it would have been degrading to England to have borne. If any blame can attach to the ministers of this country upon that occasion, it is only for having been patient too long. The dignity of a great and independent nation should never be compromised.

Though unsuccessful in the avowed and most material point, I have reason to believe that important advantages resulted from the mission, which I apprehend, are not generally known. Some circumstances accidentally came to my knowledge, which led me to suspect that many interesting particulars respecting the plan and organization of the Irish rebellion, were betrayed to Lord Malmesbury during his residence at Lille; and from the nature of the communication it could have come only from persons high in office, and entrusted with the most important secrets of the government. So notorious a violation of every established principle of integrity and honor would be utterly

incredible in any other country ; but with such men as Barras and Reubel, the infamy of the transaction tends only to increase its probability.

The ministers of Great Britain had now given proof to the world, that there were certain situations in which they were ready to shake hands with the regicide republic ; but it remained for them to shew that these were alone the effect of adversity, and that, with the first gale of prosperity, their terror of jacobinism, or their ardor for war, would revive. The high respect which I entertain for the integrity and talents of the noble lord who then presided over the foreign department, makes it painful for me ever to mention him in any language except that of admiration. But I am persuaded that he feels and regrets his rashness, in having returned an answer so decidedly repulsive to the amicable overtures of Bonaparte. During a contest discriminated by a succession of errors more extraordinary than any recorded in history, no measure has been attended with such fatal consequences, as the rejection of a proposal, which, if received and acted upon with a spirit of placability, might have led to a permanent peace. The child and champion of Jacobinism, (as he has been emphatically called) at that time held his authority by a precarious tenure ; he had difficulties to encounter

in his internal administration sufficient to occupy all the energies of his mind ; his armies were disorganized, and the nation was desirous of peace. This, then, was the precise moment which a prudent administration would have selected to treat. But the cabinet of England had other views. Elated by the splendid achievements of Suwarow, they fondly believed that the period was at length arrived, when the threats of the Duke of Brunswic would be fulfilled. It might indeed have been more consistent with wisdom to take a different view of affairs. For though the Austrian soldiers had proved to the world, that their former defeats were ascribable rather to the incapacity of their commanders, than to the defect of courage, or the want of activity ; yet it ought to have been remembered, that the despicable weakness of the directorial councils had left their armies destitute of almost every resource.\* That many-headed monster had fallen, and the reins of government were now entrusted to the hands of a hero, whose past exploits were sufficient to inspire an alarming presage of what he might perform, when all the resources of France were abandoned entirely to his own direction.

Though the French had been driven out of Italy by the eccentric genius of a savage, yet

\* See Campagne du General Jourdan, &c.



it was difficult for any man, who impartially considered the military spirit of the Gallic people, or the splendid talents of its chief, to discover any thing in the reverses of a single campaign, to raise the expectations of their enemies to so high a pitch, that they were justified in rejecting all offers of peace. Besides, the battle of Zurich had in some measure restored the balance of war, and clearly demonstrated, that though the Russians were irresistible when commanded by Suwarow, their fortunes were inseparably united with his, and if deprived of him, they had nothing to oppose to a host of experienced warriors, which France could marshal in every exigency, but disunion, ignorance, and presumption. Neither ought it to have escaped the observation of ministers, that the instability of Paul was no longer to be trusted. The ingratitude of his ally, in abandoning a general to whom he was indebted for the conquest of Italy, was sufficient, it must be confessed, to have offended a temper less irritable than that of the Russian autocrat.

This clearly explains his animosity towards Austria ; his animosity towards England, however, has never been accounted for ; but if I am rightly informed, it proceeded from a motive no less contemptible for its futility, than fatal in its consequences. The following anec-



dote was related to me by a gentleman of high rank, and great connections, whose official situation rendered him an almost constant attendant on the emperor. The characteristic of Paul was caprice. Hence he estimated things, not according to their intrinsic value, but according to the difficulty which he experienced in procuring them. Among other objects of vanity, he had set his heart upon the English garter, and communicated his wishes to the English court. His eagerness to obtain it was, as I am assured, so great, that he would have preferred a few yards of ribbon to the most liberal subsidy, which the prodigality of the minister could have offered. The subsidy, however, was more easily acquired than the ribbon. For so lavish was Great Britain of her money, that she thought it better to give it for nothing, than not to give it all. But the garter was a present of a very different nature, and did not come out of the pockets of the people. Though originally a catholic order, it had never decorated a member of the Greek church. No precedent could be discovered by the erudite researches of Sir Isaac Heard. Having been never initiated in the etiquette of a court, I shall not attempt to explain from what quarter, or on what grounds the insurmountable obstacle arose. Precedent I know to be a most powerful agent with statesmen and lawyers; and

sometimes, I believe, is carried so far, that they prefer doing wrong in conformity to established practice, to doing right in contradiction to it. This, therefore, might have created the impediment, or it might have proceeded from religious scruples, and a delicate apprehension that the purity of the order might have been contaminated by the difference of faith, though it is certainly proof against every other contamination. Whatever may have been the motive, the mischief was done; nor is this unfortunately the only instance in which *conscience* has been opposed to the interests of the nation. So far from refusing to gratify the autocrat of the north, a prudent minister would have inquired if there was any other colour or variety of colours, which pleased him more than blue, and have set all the manufacturers in the country to work, to produce a decoration exactly suited to the imperial taste. This ought to have been done, and if we may be allowed to judge from the general conduct of the war, the urgency of the measure was probably one of the most cogent reasons for omitting it.

A change of administration produced a change of system. The acrimonious spirit of personal hostility, which had hitherto embittered the conduct of the war, in great measure expired with the administration of Mr. Pitt.

The mild virtues of his successor, more calculated to shine in the tranquil scenes of domestic repose, than amid the ruins of a desolated world, conduced to render him more friendly to peace; and with respect to France, events had taken place, calculated to inspire a rational hope, that she might be induced to treat on honourable terms. The death of Paul, and the consequent dissolution of the northern confederacy, had considerably diminished the powers of annoyance, till then in the hands of the enemy. The splendor and magnitude of our naval victories were no less objects of admiration and dread, than the continental victories of France. The vapouring boast of invasion, so far from alarming the sober part of the nation, began at last to be treated with the contempt it deserved. Like its twin brother Jacobinism, it had served the purpose of ministers, and was laid at rest. In my estimation it was folly to suppose that so consummate a general as Bonaparte should risk his troops and reputation in an enterprize, the chances of which, by his own confession, were greatly against his success. The public opinion, both in France and her dependant states, was likewise known to be entirely in favour of peace, and it could hardly be expected that so enlightened a statesman would venture as yet entirely to disregard the influence of pub-

lic opinion. Under this persuasion a negotiation was opened between Lord Hawkesbury and Mr. Otto, the result of which was unexpectedly communicated on the 2d of October 1801, in the London Gazette, by announcing the signature of preliminaries. The general joy diffused over the whole nation by this happy event proclaimed the sentiments of the people, in terms more unequivocal than those of addresses of thanks. Delighted at being delivered from the burthens incidental to a protracted contest, hardly any one attended to the conditions of the treaty or deigned to reflect at how dear a rate the spices of Ceylon and the fevers of Trinidad were purchased.

This feeling was laudable, and sprung from the best propensities of the human heart; for it is no paradox to affirm that peace upon any terms, not inconsistent with national honour, is preferable to the most prosperous war, and that no acquisitions are purchased so dearly, as those which are made with the sword. An incalculable advantage accrued to the world from this short and tempestuous truce, for such it in reality proved. The motive of the war was totally changed. It was no longer a contest for the extermination of principles, it became a contest for the extension of power, and was accordingly conducted, with a few exceptions, in strict conformity to the established



code of plunder and devastation, universally dignified with the preposterous appellation of the LAW OF NATIONS. It is however worthy of observation, that conditions infinitely more favourable than those acceded to in 1801, would have been readily granted in 1796. And hence it is evident, that the blood and treasure, so profusely wasted in a protracted contest of five years, proved a gratuitous sacrifice to the wanton vengeance of frustrated ambition, and the interested views of speculation. With respect to our great, and only active ally, by terminating the contest at an earlier period, we should have preserved both his territory and his honour, for unfortunately, in his different negotiations with France; the sacrifices to which he consented, were not restricted to the loss of a province, but were extended to objects of higher moment, which till this fatal era of universal confusion had been held sacred by every civilized people.

The final partition of Poland, which immediately followed the secession of Prussia from the grand confederacy, exceeds in enormity any act of iniquity, with which the regicide republic can be upbraided. A work lately published in France, (though written by Rutiliere for the instruction of the unfortunate Louis XVI. when dauphin) deserves attention, since it throws new light on the transactions of Poland



during the stormy reign of the unhappy Stanislaus; and places the crimes and cunning of Catherine in a light, that cannot fail to devote her memory to the execration of posterity, while there is a corner left in the human heart for freedom and humanity to lurk in. This monstrous scheme, originally commenced under the incongruous union of a conqueror, a prostitute, and a saint, was progressively extended through an endless variety of guilt. Fraud and treachery, oppression and cruelty, ingratitude and injustice, were perhaps never practised with such daring effrontery, as by the agents of a princess, who, aspiring to pre-eminence both in power and in vice, first crowned and then dethroned the adulterous partner of her bed, alternately making the royal puppet the tool and victim of her vanity. The ultimate consummation of this diabolical project, which has been vainly defended by the partisans of despotism, as a necessary consequence of the balancing system so highly venerated by the politicians of the last century, and so entirely overturned by those of the present, was reserved for a moment when Europe wanted some great example of integrity and virtue, to rouse her languid patriotism.

By the treaty of Campo Formio this fraudulent policy was completely systematized, so that it now forms the basis of that abominable

code of complicated robbery which constitutes the modern science of diplomatic compensations. The contracting parties boldly proclaimed, in the face of an indignant and astonished world, that honesty and honour are insidious terms thrown out to deceive the unwary, but that in the breasts of those, to whom providence has entrusted her most important concerns, no ties are binding except those of interest. Interest is the deity at whose insatiate shrine the sovereigns of Europe unblushingly sacrifice every principle till now held sacred by society; fame, friendship, and faith. Though in the negotiations at Paris, the probity, or the presumption of England had indignantly revolted at the idea of consenting to the secularization of the ecclesiastical electorates, as a compensation to Austria for the loss of the Netherlands, the virtue of their sovereign was less austere, and readily condescended to accept an equivalent for the cession of Belgium and of Austrian Lombardy, though purchased by the destruction of the Venetian republic, his firm and faithful ally. Nothing now seemed wanting to give a legal sanction to this nefarious system, but the consent of the Germanic diet, and that too was extorted by fear, or promises, during the Congress at Radstadt. Impelled by the most dishonourable motives, Prussia and Austria

agreed to suspend their ancient jealousies, in order the more easily to repay themselves for the losses and expences of the war, by the general subversion of states and property, effected under the name of indemnities. Against their united power it was in vain for the devoted objects of their devouring avarice to plead the precedents of better times, the authority of treaties, or the law of nations. No law existed except that of force. Nothing was deemed dishonest that violence could accomplish; and nothing disgraceful except moderation.

An example, recommended by such high authorities, was too inviting to be viewed with indifference. It was adopted with avidity by all established governments as the easiest mode of negociation: even the boasted integrity of Britain, I blush to confess it, engrafted it as a leading article in her political creed; it has been blazoned forth in the house of commons by an eloquent member of the cabinet, under the disgusting appellation of *new morality*, and has been practised in India with such successful imitation, as almost to surpass the original.

An alliance with Russia inspired Austria with the fallacious hope, that while the conqueror of Italy was busily occupied in the



reduction of Egypt, she might by a well concerted attack regain her ascendancy in Europe. Neither can it be denied that the events of 1799, in great measure justified the expectation. In the course of a single campaign the armies of the Directory were driven from the banks of the Adige to the walls of Genoa, which alone remained of all their former conquests; and little doubt was entertained by the cabinet of Vienna, that the wealthy capital of the Ligurian republic would fall an easy prey in the ensuing spring. The surrender of Nice, perhaps of Toulon and Marseilles, was already anticipated, and even an insurrection organized in idea, which, rapidly spreading from the coasts of the Mediterranean to the gates of Lyons, would give an irrecoverable shock to the republic. The arrival of Bonaparte, however, produced a sudden change, and dispelled the clouds which darkened the horizon of France. Surrounded by the companions of his former triumphs, he crossed the Alps by narrow defiles, which a judicious system of defence might have rendered impervious. But the forces of Austria were no longer under the command of the Russian hero. A superannuated invalid had been appointed to succeed him, who neglected to secure the most important passes, while he amused himself with menacing the frontier of France. With the



rapidity of lightning the first Consul descended into the plains of Lombardy, accompanied by the terror of a mighty name, and the proud assurance of victory. The ascendancy of France was permanently established in the plains of Marengo, and the hopes of Austria for ever levelled in the dust. All the towns and fortresses regained by the genius and the activity of Suwarow, were disgracefully surrendered by a single stroke of the pen, for so great was the consternation occasioned by the fate of a single battle, that General Melas considered it as a most fortunate circumstance to be allowed to purchase a momentary respite at the expence of national honour. These losses were confirmed after an inglorious struggle by the treaty of Luneville, with the additional surrender of Tuscany; and as the Adige was taken as the boundary between the Austrian and Cisalpine territory, the emperor's influence in Italy was nearly destroyed.\*

Notwithstanding the tide of war had hitherto rolled with an almost equable current in favour of France, the fortune of Austria was by no means desperate. Though considerably curtailed in population and territory, she was not as yet degraded from the elevated station which she had held during so long a period. Bohemia

\* By the treaty of Campo Formio it was the Canal Bianco.

and Hungary, Austria and Moravia, Gallicia and the Tyrol, together with the vast track of mountains which extended from the Danube to the Adriatic and the Po, inhabited for the most part by a warlike race of men, attached to their sovereign by the strongest ties, and total strangers to the modern doctrines of equality, wanted only a better system of government to render their resources inexhaustible. Rich in corn, in cattle, and in mines, Austria found within the limits of her own possessions almost every thing requisite to give comfort, or splendor, or stability to states. The grand desideratum was a more enlightened system of political economy, the abolition or limitation of certain feudal abuses, and a wider field for the exertion of talents. These improvements are in their nature slow and progressive, and could only be attained by a long duration of peace.

The defects inherent in her military establishment had been proclaimed by successive defeats. Educated in the tactics of Brown and Daun, and promoted according to the seniority of rank, few of her generals attained to the supreme command, till they were physically incapacitated from service. Subservient to the control of the Aulic council, an Austrian general even when he obtained an advantage, dared not venture to advance till a courier had returned with fresh instructions from Vienna.

Hence moments the most important were allowed to escape, which if actively employed might possibly have led to results no less decisive than glorious. Every order was also detailed with the minutest accuracy, from which it was dangerous under any circumstances to depart. Hence the love of glory became a passion subordinate to the dread of incurring the tremendous responsibility to which the slightest deviation might expose a commander. Various other defects were closely interwoven in the existing system of Austrian tactics, which it would be easy to develope, had I leisure at present for the investigation. Sufficient however has been already said, to shew that much time and industry would be required to eradicate them in a country where obstinacy and prejudice are indigenious.

Peace therefore was confessedly the true policy of Austria; it was essential to her existence as a first-rate power, and ought accordingly to have been made the leading object of her pursuit. Neither was it less apparent, that her stability was requisite toward maintaining the equilibrium of the European common-wealth, because she was in fact the only continental state, whose resources and population enabled her to oppose an efficacious barrier to the overwhelming ambition of France. For this reason, the system, best calculated to



promote the prosperity of Austria, ought to have been strenuously enforced by the arguments and influence of England; instead of rashly attempting to hurry into a war, no less repugnant to her interest than to her inclination.

But no sooner was it determined by the British cabinet to recommence hostilities, than all the odious passions of the human breast were again called into action. Accredited agents were stationed in every court which had an easy communication with France, with ample latitude for mischief. No sums however great were considered by the ministers to be misapplied, which were squandered for the purpose of exciting insurrections to overturn the consular throne. With a mixed sensation of astonishment and contempt Europe viewed the conduct of the English diplomatists. Yet the absurdity of the attempt was so glaring, that I very much doubt whether the complaints and clamours of M. Talleyrand would have persuaded many, that the government of a country celebrated alike for sense and integrity, could descend to measures of so base a nature, had they not been boldly proclaimed by the pompous folly of their patron. For my own part, I confess that I was inclined still to suspect that much exaggeration had been employed by the minister of Bonaparte, till his assertion was confirmed by the testimony of



a gentleman of unquestionable veracity, who assured me that some of the letters which passed between our B——n plenipotentiary and the Revolutionary committee, had been communicated to him by the Prefect of Strasburg. "Here," said the magistrate (holding out a paper containing an order for money) as my friend one morning entered his room, "here is a notable proof of the senseless prodigality of our foes."\*

It is difficult to decide whether measures like these are most entitled to indignation or scorn. There is something imposing in acts of daring atrocity, while meaner villany entails on its perpetrators nothing but disgrace. When men bid defiance to the precepts of morality, they should be particularly cautious that they do not also abandon the guidance of common sense.

The moderation of Mr. Addington proving totally inadequate to the views and wishes of the zealous advocates for eternal war, Mr. Pitt was again placed at the helm of affairs, as the only man capable of conducting the contest with decision and vigor. The plan of crusading was immediately revived; and by the bribes and promises of an infatuated administration both Austria and Russia were

\* This statement is fully confirmed by the curious publication of Mr. Mehè.

induced to arm. Hitherto the latter had acted solely under the character of auxiliary, but she now became a principal in the sanguinary struggle for empire, and revealed to the world, what the policy of Catherine had studied to conceal, the fatal secret of her own inferiority. While contending against the indocile valour of the Turks, or butchering the undisciplined peasantry of Poland, the tactics of Russia were formidable ; but when opposed to the science of France, her presumption and incapacity became alike conspicuous. Her cavalry, in the judgment of military men, is by far the worst in Europe ; her engineers the most ignorant ; and her officers, for the most part, men raised either by favour, or by the barbarous achievements of untutored ferocity. Suwarow alone, since the commencement of the contest with revolutionary France, forms a proud exception to this general censure. Elevated by the impulse of native genius, he soared to a level with the greatest commanders which modern Europe has produced. Under the garb and manners of a savage, he concealed a mind enlightened by the study of history, and prepared to shine in the highest military station, by a thorough acquaintance with every science applicable to the practice of war.

These however were unwelcome truths, not suffered to penetrate into the palace of St.

Petersburg. Unacquainted with the real interests of his country, it was natural for the unexperienced ardor of a youthful emperor to consider the precocious refinements of the capital as an unquestionable proof of the wealth and prosperity of the provinces; while he exercised on the parade his well-dressed, and well-disciplined guards, he little suspected that the greater part of his troops were fed and clothed in a very different manner, and would have formed a melancholy and disheartening contrast with the pretorian cohorts of Russia. Ambitious of meriting an heroic name, he plunged without reflection into a war, destined to dissolve the potent charm to which his inhospitable deserts were chiefly indebted for their unfounded character of strength.

Dispirited by the recollection of her recent losses, Austria, it is now universally known, would have been happy to have persevered in that pacific system, which the embarrassment of her finances, the state of her army, and the fears of her people, contributed equally to recommend. Scarcely an officer joined his corps, (and I now speak from personal observation,) who was not impressed with the strongest conviction of the superiority of France, and anticipated in consequence the disgrace and ruin of his country.

Though endowed with those splendid talents



which are peculiarly qualified to fascinate and surprize, the genius of Mr. Pitt was never intended by nature for the stormy scenes in which he was placed. In ordinary times, when the affairs of nations flowed on in an even course, he might have descended to the grave with the unblemished reputation of an able financier, and an accomplished orator, and might possibly have been placed by an admiring nation on a level with a Colbert, a Sully, or a Cecil. But the extraordinary changes produced by the French revolution rendered all former combinations uncertain, and created an era in the political world, which set precedent at defiance, and baffled speculation. From the beginning of the contest, Mr. Pitt appears to have miscalculated the resources of France ; and to have regarded the war as an ordinary struggle for the acquisition of a sugar island, or of a military station, instead of contemplating it in its true light, a contest between freedom and tyranny, reason and prejudice, superstition and philosophy. From such a mighty effort, if properly directed, results might have been expected in the highest degree favourable to the condition of man. I mean not to become the apologist of atheism and murder. I execrate the atrocities of the French revolutionists as much as Mr. Burke. The enthusiasm of the people was



artfully perverted to the most atrocious purposes. The friends of sober and moderate reform were buried under the ruins of their distracted country, and the throne of despotism has been accordingly erected, where the temple of liberty should have towered.

Though it was evident to the world that no real advantage could arise from another coalition without the concurrence of Prussia, yet so eager were ministers for the renewal of hostilities, that they determined again to plunge in all the horrors of war, without ascertaining the intentions of the cabinet of Berlin. This part of the subject, however, has been so ably treated in a pamphlet published in 1806, under the title of "An Inquiry into the State of the Nation," that I shall confine my observations within very narrow limits. Conscious of my own ignorance of military affairs, I speak with diffidence of the march of an army, or the conduct of a siege; and scarcely ever venture to give an opinion, unsanctioned by that of professional men. I was however assured, by an officer of rank in the Hessian service, who felt indignant at the vacillating policy of Berlin, that nothing could have been easier than for the Electoral troops, in concert with the Prussians usually cantoned in the division of Magdeburg, to have surrounded Marshal Bernadotte's army in Hanover, and taken them prisoners without

the loss of a man. This plan, he said, might have been executed in eight and forty hours, as the officers were all on the alert; and nothing was wanting except an order from the king.

Such a bold and decisive stroke would have given splendour to the arms of the allies, and operated as an inducement to Saxony, and the other German powers of an inferior order, to join hand and heart in the common cause. But it was the destiny of Prussia to act with equal imprudence, whether she preserved her neutrality, or broke it. The balance of Europe was now in her hands; by one act of decision she might have turned the scale, and averted the calamities which so speedily ensued. Whereas by remaining a tranquil spectatress of the fall of Austria, she paved the way for her own annihilation. *Nam tua res agitur paries dum proximus ardet*, is a truth that neither the powers of oratory, the records of history, nor even the impressive lesson of personal danger, could imprint on the minds of the great continental powers. The capitulation of Ulm, and its consequent disasters, compelled the emperor to purchase peace by the cession of Italy, and of the Tyrol. The former, inestimable from the fertility of its soil, the genius of its inhabitants, and the magnificence of its cities, those splendid seat of riches, of

ciences, and of art. The latter scarcely inferior in value, from the importance of its situation as a military post, and the unshaken loyalty of its inhabitants.

Thus ended the third coalition, like every former effort for the emancipation of Europe in rivetting her fetters more tenaciously. The dreadful example of rashness and folly, so fatally elucidated in the plains of Austerlitz, might have sufficed to shew that disgrace and ruin must inevitably result from any fresh competition with France, while Bonaparte continued at the head of her armies. Yet such was the madness of Prussia, that he had no sooner humbled her hereditary rival, and driven back the barbarous hordes of Russia, disgraced and diminished to their native snows, than she resolved with unexampled temerity, to meet the conqueror. Having once embraced this desperate resolution, and secured the concurrence of the emperor Alexander, she formed a plan of operations exactly calculated to preclude the assistance of that powerful ally. Instead of waiting the arrival of the Russian troops, who were pouring to her succour from the frozen regions of the pole, and to whom the comparative mildness of a German winter would have appeared soft and genial as a summer campaign, she boldly advanced into the plains of Saxony, resolute to set the chance



of empire on the event of a single battle, and vainly flattering herself that the cumbersome tactics of Germany might for once be able to outstrip a warrior whose most astonishing quality is celerity.

At the earnest request of the king M. Genz was invited to the head quarters at Erfurt, for the ostensible purpose of preparing a manifesto, but more probably with the design of engaging him if possible, to exert his influence with Austria, in order to induce her to become a party in the war. During his residence in the camp, he kept a regular journal of all his conversations with the generals and ministers of Prussia. This important document was communicated to me by a friend of the author, and a most melancholy entertainment it afforded. This mighty host, which had courted danger with the chivalrous temerity of knight-errantry, appears never to have calculated upon the possibility of a reverse ; but to have supposed that system irresistible which had formerly subjected Silesia. Hence, after the defeat and death of the gallant prince Louis, the camp presented a scene of confusion which presaged the most fatal results. Destitute of the confidence of the troops, and mistrusting his own capacity, the commander in chief issued an order one moment and revoked it the next. The vacillation of the general was too



clearly demonstrated in every act, to escape observation; and in the minds of all who were best able to appreciate military talents, every hope of success was abandoned, unless the direction of the army was immediately committed to abler hands. Mr. Genz asserts, that on the eve of the battle of Jena, he was engaged in an interesting conversation with General Kalkreuth, at Weimar, when a deputation, composed of officers of rank and distinction, abruptly entered the room. After apologizing for their intrusion, one of them stated, in the name of the army, that the incapacity of their leader, (I grieve to mention a gallant man in terms of so little respect) appeared so clearly in all his operations, that if he were permitted any longer to retain the command, the ruin of their country was inevitable. The perilous situation in which they were placed was sufficient, they thought, to justify the adoption of measures unsanctioned by precedent, but rendered indispensable by the imperious law of necessity. The safety of the king, the lives of thousands, and the still unsullied glory of the Prussian name, depended on the decision of the moment. They therefore requested General Kalkreuth in the most impressive manner, to lay before the king an honest picture of the dangers which surrounded him, accompanied with the earnest

prayer of his gallant troops, that he would be pleased to remove their present chief, and entrust the conduct of the army to the only man (bowing to General Kálkreuth) whose talents were calculated to inspire hope, even in the present hour of distress. It was impossible for a heart alive to glory, to receive with indifference this flattering testimony from the mouths of those, who had fought and conquered by his side. Having expressed to the officers his warmest thanks for this honourable mark of their approbation, and explained to them the impossibility of complying with their request, or even of obtruding his unsolicited advice on the royal ear, he earnestly requested them to retire. No representations, however, could induce them to depart, till they had extorted a promise, that if voluntarily offered by the king, without any suggestions of his own, he would not decline the perilous honour.

The fatal catastrophe, anticipated by judgment rather than by fear, was completely realized the following day, by the destruction of a power erected by the daring genius of a hero, and which wanted a hero to support it. The death of the duke of Brunswick made ample atonement for his errors. There is a period of life when men should retire from the command of armies, or the government of

states. Had this unfortunate prince been content to repose upon the laurels which he gathered in Holland, his name might have been transmitted to after ages in undisputed possession of the praise so liberally bestowed by the royal historian of the seven years war.

The extinction of a great and warlike empire by the loss of a single battle, an event without a parallel in the annals of modern Europe, is calculated to shew that of all forms of government a military despotism is the most insecure. To give developement to the ideas excited by this extraordinary vicissitude of fortune, would require far more leisure than I can at present spare. I must therefore content myself with a few observations respecting the impolicy of Austria in neglecting to profit by a favourable moment, that was never destined to recur. Had the armies, collected on the frontiers of Poland, been suffered to advance, after the battle of Eylau had given a temporary check to the impetuous career of Napoleon, the fortune of the campaign might have been reversed; and Prussia, reinstated in all she had lost, might still retain her preponderating influence in Europe. But the pitiful jealousies, originally excited by the conquest of Silesia, were obstacles which the Austrian cabinet had neither wisdom nor mag-

nanimity to overcome. Influenced alone by the mean spirit of retaliation, and sensible only to recent injuries, they did enough to kindle the resentment of Bonaparte, without daring to do any thing that might improve their own situation. While they foolishly fluctuated between envy and fear, the Russians were exterminated at Friedland, and the treaty of Tilsit was signed.

When we read the manifesto, by which with chivalrous generosity the emperor Alexander announced to the world, his resolution never to lay down the sword, till he had driven the French out of Germany, we little expected that he would terminate the contest by consenting to the dismemberment of that very country which he so pompously promised to defend; much less that he would descend to accept a paltry share in the plunder of a brother, as the disgraceful price of his submission to France.

It is impossible seriously to examine the conduct of Prussia, and still to deny that she merited her fate. It is not on her account that I bewail her fall. The complex system of political prostitution to which she had so long and so basely adhered, deprived her deservedly of that generous sympathy to which fallen greatness has so just a claim. But as a leading member of the European common-wealth, I lament her misfortunes. I lament the loss of



her armies, the loss of her fortresses ; I lament to see her dissevered territories in the hands of an upstart, and dependent on a nation which presumptuously assumes the significant appellation of GREAT.

I must here regret, in common with every friend to the liberties of mankind, that the benevolent intentions of that illustrious statesman whose loss was irreparable to the world, should have failed of completion.

Neither is it less a subject of bitter reflection, that the rupture of the negociation should have arisen solely from the attention of England to the interests of a power, by whom she was so soon, and so shamefully deserted. The offers, made to Lord Lauderdale at Paris, were no less honourable, than advantageous to this country. For the character of Mr. Fox inspired confidence in the sincerity of England, which her recent conduct had been too well calculated to impair. That the wishes of our enemy were pacific, is clearly demonstrated in the proposal of M. Talleyrand, to restore Hanover, Malta, and the Cape ; observing “ that the first was “ for the honour of the crown, the second for “ the honour of the navy, and the latter for the “ honour of British commerce.”

These propositions, with the valuable addition of Pondicherry, Chandénagore, and Tobago, were positively rejected by Lord Lauderdale, with the express declaration, “ that

“ he felt himself bound to consider the obtaining for Russia the arrangements which she desired, as an object *more interesting if possible* to England, than those points which might be regarded as peculiarly connected with her own interests.\*”

The unsuccessful issue of these conferences is the more to be lamented, because had they ended favourably, two important objects would have been gained, independently of the waste of treasure and of blood inseparable from every campaign. The power of Prussia was then unbroken; neither was her inherent weakness suspected. For the glory of Frederic was so far identified with the nation over which he reigned, that it gave splendor and celebrity even to her greatest defects. Yet had her population and revenues been duly appreciated, it must have appeared beyond a doubt, that the

\* The extent of these arrangements, and the probability of obtaining them in the then situation of Europe, may be inferred from a paper delivered to the emperor of the French by prince Dalgrouky, a few days previous to the battle of Austerlitz. In compassion to the reader the author has curtailed, as much as possible, the painful catalogue of modern folly. He need only recall to his recollection the catamaran project, the frequent and almost yearly changes in our military system, Buenos Ayres, &c. &c. He has purposely omitted making any comments on the murder of the French ministers at Radstedt, and on the *strange* proceedings at Naples in 1799. Credite posteri !!!

part which she had sustained during half a century, had kept every nerve and sinew in an unnatural state of extension, which could not fail to impair her vital strength. Hence it might have been inferred, that upon the first reverse of fortune, the bubble would burst, and she would sink under the weight of her own incumbrances.

But another evil, and one still more important, would have been prevented. The formation of the Rhenish confederacy has surrounded France with tributary states, and placed at her disposal the troops and treasures of many vassal kings. The stated contingents which these miserable pageants are compelled to furnish with the most scrupulous exactness at the beck of their master, amount to no less than one hundred thousand effective men. This number, substracted from the population of Germany, and thrown into the opposite scale, creates a difference in the relative force of the two countries to the enormous extent of two hundred thousand men. By this fatal expedient, (to use the vigorous language of Mr. Burke), Germany has been blotted out from the map of Europe; and virtually converted from an independent nation, into a province subject to France. No plan of aggrandizement, which ambition might have adopted, could have proved more conducive to the ob-

ject in view, than the creation of a number of federative states, progressively strengthened at the expence of those who disdained to be the slaves of France, and which extends the chain of her power with little interruption, from the banks of the Rhine to those of the Vistula, and from the shores of the Baltic to the shores of Calabria. The influence of the house of Austria over the Germanic empire was thus transferred into the hands of Bonaparte, with the pompous title of Protector of the Rhenish Confederacy; and nothing seemed wanting but another coalition to confine her entirely to Hungary and Transylvania, thus virtually excluding her from any further share in the general politics of Europe. This important point has been clearly shewn in the admirable pamphlet to which I before alluded.\*

I have hitherto omitted to mention Lord Mulgrave's note to M. Talleyrand, in reply to a letter addressed to his Britannic Majesty, under date of 2nd of January, 1805, by Bonaparte, immediately after his assumption of the imperial dignity. The grand feature of this communication is its absurdity. For what can be more ridiculous than for ministers to talk of their anxiety for peace, at a time when they reject the only means by which peace can be obtained. It is natural for a courtier to

\* Inquiry into the State of the Nation.



shelter his duplicity under the flimsy veil of etiquette; but it is difficult for professions to deceive a nation, when directly contradicted by facts. The unprecedented mode of communication, for the second time adopted by the ruler of France, was treated by the friends of government as in the highest degree insolent and presumptuous; though they would have probably considered a similar step from the head of the ancient dynasty, as a mark of respect and cordiality. Great God! to talk of precedent at a time to which no former precedent applies. The prostration of Europe is unprecedented; the power of France is also unprecedented since the proudest era of Rome. The situation, alas! is also unprecedented to which England has been reduced by the incapacity of men, who professed, like Lord Mulgrave, "to be ready to avail themselves of the first opportunity to procure again the advantages of peace," while they indignantly spurned at every overture. It is far easier to vilify the character of Bonaparte, than to imitate it. With all his crimes, and all his excesses, it is now universally admitted that since the days of Julius Cæsar, Europe has not beheld so extraordinary a man. Among most of those who have been honoured by their contemporaries with the title of *great*, he shines *velut inter ignes lumen*. I must apologize for the incorrect-

ness of the simile. The star of Napoleon borrows not its radiancy from a brighter luminary; but communicates splendor to a subordinate system of dependent satellites, which, deprived of his reflected lustre, would never have glimmered in the political hemisphere.

The difficulties opposed by his Majesty's ministers to every proposal that originated with France, were surely sufficient to have persuaded the nation, as they did the rest of the world, that no change of principle, nor vicissitude of fortune, could ever produce that particular crisis, when, in their opinion, it would be safe and honourable to treat. Yet notwithstanding the rejection of his former offers, this tremendous foe, whose hatred to Great Britain is called implacable, made three other attempts at negociation, in the course of the year 1807.

These are so well known to the public, that I shall do little more than enumerate them in chronological order. The first came through the medium of the Austrian ambassador in the month of April, and was accepted by Mr. Canning, "as far as England was concerned, subject only to the condition of a like acceptance, on the part of all the powers who were engaged in the war." This declaration was accompanied by an assurance, "that his Majesty would lose no time in communicating with the powers connected with him by the bonds of amity; and if their views should

“ *be favourable to his imperial Majesty’s proposal, of concerting with them the mode in which such negotiations should be opened, &c.*”

This was precisely the answer of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and yet no public document was produced to shew that any steps were ever taken in order to carry it into effect. Neither does it appear, that any farther communication took place on the subject between this country and Austria, till the month of November, when a fresh proposal was made by prince Stahremberg. Had the first overture been accepted, it is highly probable that the debasement of Russia might have been prevented, as the battle of Friedland was not fought till the 14th of June, and the proposition of the emperor to act as mediator was transmitted to Mr. Canning on the 18th of April. Had a negotiation commenced, we may fairly infer that hostilities would have been suspended in Poland; and had that been the case, we should not now have seen the councils of Russia entirely guided by the ascendancy of France, and the emperor Alexander moving, like a puppet, at the will of Caulancourt.

By one of the articles of the treaty of Tilsit, our quondam-magnanimous ally was allowed to offer his mediation to effect a peace between Great Britain and France, provided it should



be accepted within a month. To the notification of M. Alopeus, who officially imparted the intentions of his master, Mr. Canning, after dwelling long upon the pacific views of the king, required, as a preliminary, that he should be made acquainted with the secret articles of the treaty of Tilsit, and that he should likewise be informed of the exact terms upon which France was inclined to treat. From the nature of this demand, fresh instructions became necessary from St. Petersburg, and the discussion was accordingly removed thither, and entrusted to the management of Lord G. L. Gower.

It cannot be denied that the explanation given by General Budberg was far from satisfactory. Like the responses of the ancient oracles, that minister's statement was calculated to admit of two opposite constructions; either "that there were some secret articles, *none* of which concerned the interests of England," or "*some of them only* did not concern them." It, however, appeared from this conversation, that the French emperor had communicated to his imperial ally the basis upon which he was prepared to treat.

This important point having been ascertained, it was natural to suppose that the anxiety for peace, so repeatedly proclaimed by his majesty's ministers, would have induced them to avail themselves of the favourable opportunity. No such thing. The only object



which seems to have influenced the mind of the Secretary of State was to display his talents as an author. In every dispatch we may visibly discover the pretensions of a man, who considers a well sounding period to be an irrefragable proof of political wisdom; and regards a quiz, or a lampoon as the highest attainments which the genius of a statesman can reach. But while this eloquent gentleman was flourishing and parrying with his pen, an account of the bombardment of Copenhagen, and the capture of the Danish fleet, arrived at St. Petersburg; and excited so much indignation in the mind of the emperor, that he refused any longer to maintain an amicable intercourse with a nation, which had so outrageously violated the sacred laws of humanity. I fairly confess that at the time of aggression, I was inclined to impute this violent measure to the imperious dictates of necessity; and gave credit to ministers for possessing such information as might in some measure palliate its almost unparalleled atrocity. Had this been the case, a regard for decency would surely have tempted even the witty apostle of the *new morality* to have produced it, if not in justification of his own honour, at least as due to that of the nation. But subsequent events have led me to suspect, that I was more indulgent to ministers than they deserved, and that I greatly overrated the penetration of men, who were

utterly unacquainted with the pestilential climate of Walcheren,\* and who so far mistook the Spanish character as to believe that imbecility and indolence might successfully contend against the skill and activity of the French.

This rooted animosity, so affectedly disguised under the thread-bare veil of conciliation, was still more strikingly exemplified in the answer returned to the second proposal of Austria. It would be useless to comment on the insincerity of professions so frequently and so ineffectually made; or to shew with what eagerness his majesty's ministers recurred to forms, instead of manfully declaring their aversion to peace. The reasons alleged by the Secretary of State, for refusing to give credit to the intentions of France, are every way worthy of their contriver. For could it once be established as an

\* I did not intend to have said any thing more upon this disgraceful subject at present, because I wanted language to express my feelings. But it is impossible to remain silent, when an attempt is made to implicate the honour of the British navy. Let the sense and generosity of a grateful nation resist the insidious attack! Let them unite with the city in demanding an inquiry, which becomes now more necessary than ever. In firm, but respectful language, let them carry to the throne the undisguised sentiments of their hearts, and express their abhorrence of the conduct of men, who in order to screen the general, whom they so imprudently selected for an important command, are mad enough to risk the existence of the country, by offending those, on whom she almost entirely depends for her safety.

axiom in politics, *that an attempt to negociate is a sign of hostility*; it would follow of course, that the ~~most~~ convincing proof, which can possibly be given of a pacific disposition, IS TO REJECT EVERY OVERTURE FOR PEACE.

The result of this effort proved exactly such as was anticipated, and probably sought after, by ministers. Educated in all the prejudices of the ancient school, and wedded to them by the united impulse of reason and habit, Prince Stahremberg demanded his passports, and quitted a country, whose diplomatic language he was no longer able to comprehend.

Thus ended all prospect of peace, and left Great Britain in that happy state to which her minister had strove to conduct her. Separated from all connection with the continent of Europe, no less by the policy of her government, than by the tempestuous element that encircles her shores, she was reduced exactly to the situation, in which France was placed at the commencement of the revolutionary war. There existed not a power in the civilised world whom she could call her friend, except Sweden and the United States of America. Connected as we are with the trans-atlantic republics by consanguinity of blood, by mutual pursuits and mutual interests, by similarity of language, by customs, habits, and fashions, it required some ingenuity on the part of the ministry, to dissolve an union cement-



ed by so many ties. But the mind of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was never at a loss for expedients, when the grand desideratum of universal hostility was to be accomplished.

Now as it is impossible to suppose that an able financier who has studied political economy in Westminster Hall, can have any other motive for loving war, than because it is attended with bloodshed and expense, I am half inclined to believe that there is some mysterious blessing in store for the nation, which my limited understanding is unable to discover. And this supposition acquires additional probability, when I find the minister so anxiously bent on fulfilling his purpose, that he readily consents to every sacrifice, even that of our commerce, to attain it. This I conceive to be a point of view under which the subject has never yet been regarded: I shall therefore state the case as briefly as I can, and leave the inference to be drawn by the public.

Our ships were excluded from all the ports of Europe by the preponderating influence of France, but by the means of American bottoms, our manufactures continued to find their way into the foreign market, and were publicly sold in all the cities of Germany, Italy and even France itself, under the name of American goods. In vain did Napoleon thunder out decree after decree, and enforce his prohibition with rigorous severity. He



might as well have forbidden the rain to fall, or the wind to blow. Our coffee and sugar were universally drunk in every house on the Continent, and our cottons and cloths as universally worn at Berlin, Milan, Amsterdam, and Paris. This contraband trade was carried to so great an extent that it prevented the ruin of our manufacturers. What now does the minister do? Why he issues the proclamation, which from mistaken motives has been so generally reprobated, under the title of ORDERS OF COUNCIL, and hermetically closes all the ports of Europe against the produce of England and her colonies. Some parts of his system have been sadly misconceived. It was presumed to be his intention to have excited a general revolt in all the provinces of France, by depriving the natives of Jesuits' bark and Indigo. No such thing. His reasons I confess are too obscure for me to explain, but without doubt they are equally wise; unless the reader is prepared to agree in opinion with some of his friends, that Napoleon the great is the dreadful instrument of Providence, designed to accomplish some mighty change in the established order of things, and that all the princes in Europe, together with their generals and ministers, their Chatham, and their Percivals, are driven on by a supernatural impulse to act in the manner

most conducive to the fulfilment of that great and momentous dispensation.

From the foregoing statement, which I have endeavoured to render as concise and clear as I am able, one alarming inference may be drawn, viz. *that whatever is not subject to the dominion of Great Britain, is virtually dependent upon France.* She may indeed affect to treat the continental powers as free states; she may solicit one to acknowledge a newly created sovereign, and court another to guarantee a treaty; but she feels that her wishes must be equally complied with, whether delivered in the friendly language of a request, or the haughty tone of a mandate. Of this no man in his senses entertains the smallest doubt. The conviction is lamentable; but what is still more grievous to an English heart, is the sad reflection that this tremendous fabric of military despotism has been raised by the folly and the corruption of England. Had our ministers been blessed with common prudence, or the representatives of the people been only half as attentive to the interests of the nation, as to their own, these things could have never happened. With the infatuation of madmen we rushed into the war, with the infatuation of madmen we still pursue it; though every successive attack has added to the power which it was meant to overturn; and every successive

campaign, by deteriorating our prospects, has curtailed our means of negotiation.

Had we even accepted the proposals which were jointly made by the emperors Alexander and Napoleon at Erfurt, the final overthrow of the Austrian monarchy might in all probability have been prevented. It will undoubtedly be said that we acted with a dignity becoming a mighty nation, in refusing to acknowledge an usurper for the legitimate sovereign of Spain. God forbid! that I should ever discourage those noble feelings of justice and generosity, which distinguish the natives of this happy island from the rest of Europe; or that I should ever advise the sacrifice of national honour. But states, like individuals, are not always at liberty to chuse that which is intrinsically best; but are compelled to select among comparative evils, that which is attended with the smallest danger. Before we rejected the imperial offers, it would have been prudent to have considered the practicability of restoring the Bourbon line to the throne of Castille, as well as the means which we possessed of effecting it; and hence might have arisen a question respecting the policy of wasting the armies and treasures of England in a contest, which could not fail to terminate in disappointment and disgrace. On what can we depend for success? Is it on the energy of a people debased by superstition

and despotism, who have nothing to lose and little to gain in the contest? Is it on the exertions of a nobility, scarcely less bigoted and ignorant, who fight for privilege and not for freedom, and are prepared for the most part to offer at the shrine of a conqueror, the homage of flattery, so long and shamefully prostituted to the upstart minion of the queen? Is it on the patriotism of a Junta, who caught with avidity at every subterfuge to postpone the meeting of the Cortes, forgetting that it is necessary, in order to make men brave, to give them rights that are worth defending, and who, from the apprehension of meeting with the censure which their dastardly conduct deserved, foolishly restricted the liberty of the press, the only instrument capable of infusing terror into the callous bosom of their oppressor?—*Our enemy* lost not this favourable opportunity; but instantly taking advantage of the supineness of his foes, by the abolition of the inquisition, the suppression of feudal jurisdictions; and the equalization of territorial imposts, conferred more solid blessings upon the people of Spain in the space of a year, than the boasted humanity of their ancient rulers had done in a century.\*

\* Those who are desirous of meeting with more ample details respecting these *chef-d'œuvres* of ministerial sagacity, may find them in abundance in the last six numbers of the *Edinburgh Review*.



That our troops will accomplish all that human valour can achieve, has been proved on the plains of Maida, and on the sands of Alexandria. But what could be expected from a handful of heroes, when opposed to the numerous legions which Bonaparte is able to muster? Besides, the superior skill of his generals in the grand evolutions of an extensive campaign was sufficient to inspire the most sanguine with alarm. Yet inferior as we were thought in the *science of arms*, it was reserved for Cintra and Talavera to manifest to the world, that it is possible for a defeat to prove more advantageous than a victory; and even for a victory to be attended with all the disastrous consequences of a defeat.

That we shall be ultimately constrained to acknowledge Joseph Bonaparte as king of Spain, or as emperor of Turkey, should his brother please in the pride of power to confer on him the Ottoman sceptre, is a melancholy truth, which no candid enquirer can deny. What then is to be gained by protracting the contest? We may send armies to Lisbon, and armies to Ferrol, and order our generals (even when by chance they are selected with discernment) to submit to the guidance of a *commis*, incapable of perceiving that he is deceived by every one who approaches him; who with a generous credulity, not quite so well suited to the profession of a minister, as to that of

a monk, believes that soldiers, like the forces of Cadmus, spring up completely equipt from every clod; and who, though actually living within a few leagues of Madrid, was the last man in the peninsula, to learn that the capital was in the hands of the French. But this will avail us nothing. It is not in the power of Great Britain to prevent Joseph Bonaparte from being sovereign of Spain. The folly of the undertaking is strikingly exemplified in the dispatches of Sir John Moore, who in spite of difficulties and dangers, which nothing could have overcome but skill and courage like his own, by his judicious plans disconcerted the deep laid schemes of the enemy, and convinced Bonaparte that there is nothing too arduous for British valour to perform, when led to victory by a hero.

If all our efforts to replace the captive sovereigns on the throne of Spain, are destined to fail, it would surely be prudent to make a merit of necessity, and to endeavour at least to procure some advantage in return, instead of ultimately yielding, without the hope of compensation, to the triumphant arms of a victor. It would have proved no ordinary benefit to the world to have impeded the final destruction of Austria; who, prostrate now at the conqueror's feet, holds her precarious throne at his pleasure. Let any man examine a map of

Europe, and if he is not blessed with feelings very different from mine, he will shudder at contemplating the diminution of power to which she has been reduced by the battle of Wagram. Cut off from all communication with the sea, except by the uncertain channel of a river, one bank of which is subject to a prince the ally and tool of Napoleon, she has no longer the possibility of receiving a pound of coffee or a cask of sugar, without the express permission of her conqueror. Separated from Italy by a chain of mountains, which the tactics of the enemy will easily render impassable; and from France by the tributary kingdoms of Bavaria and Wirtemberg, growing daily more formidable at her expence, she has almost ceased to exist as an European power. The outposts of the enemy are now advanced within three days march of Vienna, which it is equally dangerous to fortify, or to leave in its present defenceless state. Should the successor of Charles V. be ever rash enough to resume the sword, he must be reduced to the distressing alternative of chusing which to abandon of his two remaining kingdoms, Bohemia or Hungary, and probably that which he leaves to its fate, will be for ever severed from his dominion. His cessions of Poland, (no unmerited punishment for usurpation) by totally uncovering his northern frontier, may be productive

of evils scarcely less disastrous than the enormous loss of population and revenue.

The limits, prescribed to an ephemeral publication, will not allow me to pursue this subject farther. Enough however has been already said, to awaken the attention of thinking minds, and I write not for those who can calmly contemplate all human calamities, provided they affect not the English markets, men capable of sitting down with callous insensibility to calculate the advantage which speculating prudence may derive from the loss of a fleet, or from the destructive violence of a hurricane.

It is no unusual thing, in reviewing the situation of the inhabitants of the countries subjugated by France, for Englishmen to attribute to them sentiments analogous to their own. They wonder at the apathy so universally prevalent from Copenhagen to Naples; they are astonished that great and populous countries should have yielded without a struggle to the Gallic yoke; and they tax them with cowardice and disaffection for not rising to a man to defend *their constitution*, totally forgetting that they had no constitution to defend. The feeling of patriotism, the noblest certainly that the heart of man can embrace, is confined almost exclusively to the British isles; every where else it is an unmeaning sound, existing



solely in the pages of poetry, but totally excluded from the human bosom. We love our country, and venerate our laws, because they deserve our veneration and love; because they protect the poor from the oppression of him, on whom fortune has showered her choicest gifts, by establishing an equality founded on reason, and prescribed by nature, which is in fact the only one that can ever exist. But for what should the Prussian peasant fight? Does he possess any thing worth the hazard of life? The military conscription established in France, oppressive as it appears to a British eye, is a code of mercy compared with the system of Frederic the Great. By the latter he is destined from his cradle to be a soldier, by the former the ballot decides his fate; and even should he be enrolled in the Gallic legions, he is sure of being treated with far greater lenity, than he would have been in the service of his country. The same remark will apply to Russia with equal, or even greater propriety. I was myself once in company with a gentleman of high rank in that country, who, upon being asked how it was possible for *men* to endure such hardships as the soldiers of Alexander are exposed to, carelessly replied, "*ce ne sont pas des hommes, mais des soldats Russes.*"

Can it be hoped that beings thus excluded

from the privileges of men, will ever shew themselves in reality to be such? It is not thus that the armies of Napoleon are trained to conquest. They are taught to participate in the triumphs of their leaders, and to value the national glory as their own. A Russian or a Prussian may be instructed to move with the mechanical precision of an automaton. He may encounter death with the indifference of a creature who knows not the value of life; but a mind so brutified will never be animated with a sentiment more heroic than the passive courage of despair. For should the arms of the despot, by whose orders he is dragged from his native hovel, be crowned with success, the best he can hope for, is to return to his rags, maimed and neglected, to add one unit more to the miserable aggregate of slaves and beggars, who are treated and transferred like beasts of burthen, as the caprice or passion of an arbitrary tyrant may decide.

Wherever the feudal system prevails in all its ancient deformity, man has little to excite his courage, or to animate his industry. To breathe and vegetate like the ox, which draws his plough, would be a state of felicity compared with that of a Russian boor. Having nothing better to anticipate, and nothing worse to apprehend, he would behold the

fall of the empire prematurely civilized by a savage Lycurgus, with the same sottish insensibility, that he heard of the murder of the husband and son of that celebrated princess, upon whose crimes and vices the venal pen of flattery has unblushingly prostituted the title of GREAT.

These are simple facts, and are known to all who have visited the north of Europe, not only her courts and cities in the train of an ambassador, but who have penetrated into her provinces, and entered her cottages, those forlorn abodes of filth and distress. It is in the latter alone that the condition of man can be studied with accuracy. In the splendor of St. Petersburg, the traveller may forget that plants are exhausted by being forced beyond their natural strength; but if he finds poverty and oppression in every district, he may pronounce with confidence, that there is something unsound at the heart.

Subjugation to France is in the estimation of an Englishman, the severest calamity that heaven could inflict, for it implies every thing most hateful to his imagination,—subversion of property, extinction of commerce, annihilation of freedom. But with the exception of Switzerland, and perhaps of some favoured parts of the Austrian dominions, it presents it-

self in very different colours to the rest of Europe. To them the armies of France have brought emancipation from slavery; and by bursting the shackles of feudal tyranny, and of papal superstition, have conferred an inestimable benefit on the world. By the first of these blessings men have regained the power of acting, by the second that of thinking for themselves. The shock of the revolution has awakened the Italians from a slumber of two hundred years; and roused them to action by every incentive that can inflame and stimulate the activity of man. Some indeed of the privileged orders may have reason to lament the change; but privileged orders are themselves such atrocious abuses, that the equalization of privileges would be alone a subject of lasting triumph to the world. The abolition of monopolies, and of all asylums for criminals has done more to promote the happiness of mankind, than all the bulls and decretals which ever issued from the papal see. Assassins will no longer fly in the face of insulted justice, nor will the Romans be compelled to make use of rancid oil, because it is the produce of the estates of a nephew of the pope.\* These ob-

\* This actually happened while I was at Rome. The duke of Braschi, having obtained from his uncle Pius VI, an exclusive privilege for supplying the city with oil, would



servations will apply still more strongly to Spain, for there the inquisition had erected its throne amidst racks, and scourges, and auto-de-fe. That regenerated country may again resume her ancient rank among the nations of the earth, and the poor and indolent noble find something better to do, than to bask in the sun with a long sword by his side, thanking heaven that he was not born a Plebeian.

I have thus endeavoured to demonstrate to the meanest capacity the evils inseparable from a war, which has been carried on with unabating animosity, till scarcely a point of contact without the circumference of this island, any longer remains. It requires little foresight to perceive that we shall soon be compelled to abandon Spain. and we may then marshal our regulars and our militia, our yeomanry cavalry, and our volunteers on this side the channel, while all the opposite coast from Flushing to Brest is covered with troops. But this parade of hostilities will do little more toward bringing the contest to a termination, than if we were to throw our guineas into the sea. We may frown and bluster as much as we please : the coasts of France are invulnerable ; and I trust the British navy

not suffer any to enter the gates, till he had sold a large quantity of very inferior quality, which was made upon his own estates,

will ever oppose an insuperable barrier to the ambition of Napoleon. Were it even possible to form another continental league, can any man be mad enough to desire it? What then remains except peace? solid and permanent peace; peace founded on the basis of mutual benefit, and which it will be for the advantage of both to maintain. For it is ridiculous to suppose that any peace can be lasting, unless both parties find it their interest to preserve it.

We hear much of the animosity which inflames the bosom of our inveterate foe; and are told that it would lead him secretly to plot our destruction, even in the midst of security and peace. But are the feelings of Englishmen less hostile towards him? Does a single day pass without our offering up prayers for his death? To suppose that two nations, so long engaged in a war for mutual extermination, should cordially shake hands, and with christian resignation forget all the blood that has been shed, is to suppose every noxious passion to be at once eradicated from the human heart, and man to be no longer man. I readily admit that the ruler of France holds England in greater abhorrence than he does any other country in the world. He hates us because we are free, and exhibit to the world a glorious example, not exactly suited to the wishes of a

despot. He hates us because we are powerful, and can bid defiance to his threats. But he views with delight the apathy of the people, and the presumptuous incapacity of their rulers ! His animosity toward England arises from her wealth, her strength, and her prosperity ; for he knows without the obstacles which she has opposed he would be undisputed master of the world. But has not hatred toward France been always regarded in this country as the criterion of patriotism ? She is our nearest neighbour, and is consequently the power with whom it is most for our comfort to live on amicable terms, and therefore we consider her as an hereditary rival, whom it is our duty to injure whenever we can do it with impunity. This feeling augments in exact proportion as her means of aggression increase. In the reign of Lewis XIV. it rose to an extraordinary height, and gradually subsided under the imbecile government of his successors, but has been kindled again with greater violence than ever by the stupendous triumphs of Napoleon.

We have been repeatedly told by the highest authorities that no peace can be safe with Bonaparte, because he will certainly break it, whenever he thinks that he can do so with advantage. But is not this exactly what has been invariably practised, not only by all his predecessors on the

Gallic throne, but by all the sovereigns who ever reigned. Did not Lewis XVI. mild and unambitious as he was, attack England when engaged in a fratricidal contest with her American colonies, for no other reason, than because the moment appeared propitious for her humiliation. Neither is this perfidious policy (as it is so frequently termed in the declamatory invectives of ministers) peculiar to France. Every page of history can furnish instances of similar perfidy, and the king or the minister, who has carried this system to the greatest perfection, has been regarded by posterity as the wisest.

This position being established, (and it is hardly possible for any person acquainted with the science of politics to dispute it), it follows of course, that if a treaty were signed tomorrow between the rival nations, neither of them would observe it one moment longer, than a due regard for their interests should prescribe. This has ever been the case, and is still more likely to happen on the present occasion, because the struggle has assumed a degree of asperity, which has not embittered the quarrels of states since the struggle between Carthage and Rome.

By the extinction, or degradation of the continental states, the balance of the world is



left entirely in the hands of two great and war-like nations, formidable alike upon their respective elements ; though the sources from whence their power arises, are widely different. The one derived from physical causes is the result of an immense, but connected territory, an enormous population, invincible armies, the strongest fortresses in Europe, a people whose genius is naturally active and equally formed for science, for manufactures, or for war, its fortunate position with respect to climate, the fertility of its soil, the excellence and variety of its natural and artificial productions.

An extensive commerce, vast beyond example in the annals of nations, has elevated England to a dazzling eminence, which excites the envy and admiration of mankind ; while the skill and bravery of her fleets have enabled her to contend with glory against a rival possessing at least three times her natural means of defence, and placed her in a situation to offer subsidies to the greatest potentates, even to the mercenary magnanimity of the Russian autocrat. This, however, is the brilliant side of the picture ; since it is hardly possible to contemplate with an impartial judgment, the slender basis upon which this mighty fabric reposes, without being compelled to acknowledge that the magnitude of her enterprises, and the ex-

tent of her colonial possessions far exceed her real resources. And this melancholy truth impresses itself more strongly on every thinking mind, since the madness of ministers has adopted a system so fatally calculated to paralyse all the efforts of Ireland. Did it ever enter into the head of any human being, except that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that as a preparation for fighting a celebrated boxer, a man should maim himself in an arm or a leg? And yet this would be wisdom compared with the system which he is pursuing in politics. Ireland alas! is the vulnerable part of the British empire, and strong indeed must be that man's nerves, who can anticipate without emotions of horror, the situation in which that country would be placed, should even twenty thousand French be ever able to make good a landing. Is it possible for any man to lay his hand upon his heart, and boldly to affirm, that he believes England can long continue to maintain its independence, if Ireland were in the hands of an enterprising foe? and yet every attempt that has been made by enlightened statesmen to avert the danger, by a measure equally recommended by wisdom, justice, or religion, has hitherto proved ineffectual.

Every year that is suffered to pass tranquilly away without overwhelming an empire in its

course, is a substantial benefit to the world. Some alteration meanwhile may take place in our situation, or in that of the enemy, which may either detract from the immensity of his resources, or tend to improve our own. Neither is it unworthy of our attention that by delaying the contest we shall have time to recruit our exhausted strength, while his must of necessity decline in a proportionate degree. Let France once resume her pacific habits, and direct her attention to commercial pursuits, and her passion for arms will subside. War is now become her sole occupation, it is the only road that leads to distinctions and riches; the views of a soldier are no longer restricted within the limits of probability, but soar with boundless temerity to every elevation, when they behold a stranger and a subaltern on the throne. But give her colonies and manufactures, let her convert her cannon into steam-engines, and her bayonets into coulters, and she will gradually imbibe all the speculating prudence of trade; and while she calculates the losses which must inevitably ensue from a rupture with the greatest maritime power in the world, she will shudder at the bare mention of war. Even the dukes and princes, who have risen from the ranks to a level with the ancient sovereigns of Germany, will prefer the luxurious ease of

a capital to the toils and dangers of a camp ; and unless they squander in profligacy what they have acquired by plunder, will never again wish to expose their wealth and dignities in the bogs of Poland, and much less in attempting to subjugate a country whose navy has still its Nelsons in reserve.

The superiority of our marine (for I will never admit the humiliating idea that it will ever cease to be superior) must always enable us at the commencement of a war, to strike a deadly blow against the commerce of France. Within the space of a year the mischief will be effected, and she will have little to apprehend from the continuance of hostilities. Hence it is natural to believe that Bonaparte will hesitate before he rashly engages in a maritime contest.

One of the grossest errors by which the human understanding is misled, (though by no means uncommon among men who have studied political economy in such pamphlets as that in which a noble lord has lately imparted to the world the notable discovery that a nation is prosperous in proportion to the paucity of its imports), is to suppose that by destroying the commerce of a foreign people, we eventually benefit our own. And the consequences of this mistake are the more to be lamented, because they frequently induce men of mercantile education to become



strenuous advocates of war, ignorant that they are assisting in kindling a fire, in which they must ultimately perish themselves. All chartered companies from the petty oppression of a country corporation to that mighty mass of tyranny and corruption which has spread discord and desolation over half the continent of Asia, are systematically the advocates of monopoly. But such narrow views are utterly inconsistent with the character of a statesman, who ought to consider every political question upon the broad basis of public utility. It is with nations as with individuals; if they have nothing to sell, they are unable to buy. In proportion to the flourishing condition of its trade and manufactures, a country is enabled to procure foreign commodities, part of which is consumed at home, and part again exported, improved and modified by the hand of industry.

Let us divest ourselves of all local prejudices, and consider Europe in the light of a great confederate republic; each member of which is labouring in its respective department for the general benefit of the whole, and exchanging advantageously its own staple commodities for the superfluities of its neighbours. Under this point of view, it instantly becomes evident, that Sweden would be unable to dress herself in the

silk which is spun in Provence and in Lombardy, unless she furnished iron for the consumption of the south. The fleets of England, which are equipt from the forests of the north, carry sugar to Stockholm and St. Petersburg ; while the cottons of Manchester, and the hardware of Birmingham, are converted into Lucca oil, or Bourdeaux wines. These truths are so obvious that they seem hardly to require illustration ; and yet so wedded is man to ancient habits, that he frequently is tempted to reject improvement from the dread of innovation. Nothing however can be more certain, than that the wisest commercial system is to encumber trade with as few restrictions as possible, and to leave it free and open to all the world.

Let us suppose that, in conformity to the mercantile plan, we were able by one fatal stroke of impolicy to annihilate all manufactures except our own ; what would be the result ? Should we be gainers by the operation ? Certainly not. On the contrary we should give a death-blow to our own commerce. Our artificers would soon be reduced to beggary, because the produce of their industry, beyond what was required for home consumption, would rot in their warehouses, for want of a foreign market. Yet still there are men, and among the number some who have written

pamphlets, who are prepared to advocate the ancient abuses, and will refer you for precedents to parliamentary speeches, and publications as dull as their own. But if precedent were an excuse for doing wrong, we might still be wandering in the errors of popery and groaning under the systematical tyranny of the house of Stuart. We might still submit to be told that heaven has selected one favoured race from among the sons of men, to trample with impunity upon the rest of its creatures.

We must indeed prepare ourselves to meet with rivals in the genius and industry of the French; though in a nation abounding neither in credit, nor in capital, no very formidable competition can suddenly arise. The superiority of England in wealth and machinery will not be easily overcome.

One of the most frequent objections urged against peace is the probability of Bonaparte's employing his immense resources to raise a navy competent to dispute with Great Britain the empire of the seas. That this will be his object we may fairly infer; but it is by no means probable that with all his exertions, he will be ever able to accomplish it. He may build ships, it is true, in all his numerous ports, but where will he find sailors to man them: pilots to navigate them: or officers

to command them? Can it be supposed that men who have studied navigation during a commercial voyage, can contend against heroes who have learned to conquer under a Howe, a St. Vincent, or a Nelson? But let us admit the fact, that the genius of Napoleon is capable of surmounting every obstacle that habit or inclination have so long opposed to the creation of a great maritime power in France, can this be a reason for refusing peace? Has England then nothing to obtain by sheathing the sword? Has she no amelioration to introduce in her military establishment? no improvements to undertake in her domestic policy; in the administration of her finances, in her parliamentary representation; and in her foreign relations? Is the diminution of taxes to be regarded as nothing? Is the reduction of expenditure a trifling consideration? Is the happiness diffused among all classes of people by the consequent alleviation from the burthens which they have so long and so patiently suffered an object unworthy of regard?

These objections however were equally liable to the Bourbon reigns, though we never before heard of the danger of treating because peace would allow leisure to an



enemy to repair his fleets, recover his trade, and improve his colonial establishments.

This part of the subject has been however so ably treated in various papers of the Edinburgh Review, that it is hardly possible to throw additional light on the subject. I shall therefore hasten to a conclusion.

Let it not be imagined that I consider peace as a situation exempt from danger, though I am decidedly of opinion that it has been greatly exaggerated, by the fears of the timid, and the interested designs of the speculator. Had we condescended to negotiate before we were abandoned by all our allies, we might certainly have obtained some advantage for them, in return for the conquests which we relinquished. But in our present insulated state the sacrifice must be gratuitous. This however perhaps is a lesser evil than the pride of an Englishman is willing to admit, as we are in possession of colonies more than sufficiently extensive, and which from the nature of their climate occasion a waste of population which the mother country can ill afford. Perhaps the only real detriment, likely to arise from the cession of the West India islands, which have been captured in the course of the war, will be to put a variety of military positions into the hands of the enemy, from whence in case of a rupture,

he may be able to attack us with a fairer prospect of success. This however is an objection which might have always been urged with equal reason against every peace.

We must also make up our minds to support with patience the ascendancy of France in all our transactions with the continent, and consequently to lower that haughty tone which we have lately assumed, and which is scarcely less ridiculous than offensive. Men of acknowledged ability should be sedulously sought after to represent their sovereign in every foreign court; and a diplomatic appointment must be no longer regarded as a *sinecure* provision for the younger son of a peer who has demonstrated his incapacity for every other office. The state of the continent imperiously requires that prudence should be substituted in the place of insolence, and that profligacy should give way to decorum. Neither is it any longer necessary for an English minister to evince his abhorrence of Jacobinism by horse-whipping a foreign nobleman, while he is in the carriage of a papal legate, but may in future reserve this display of excessive loyalty for a more private occasion.\* It might be as well also to ad-

\* The gentleman was count Carletti, a Florentine; who the minister was, I leave the reader to guess.

monish our ambassadors that the most likely method of conciliating the good will of a powerful monarch is not to treat his consort with indignity, and when she has fixed a day for a grand presentation, totally to forget the appointment, and gallantly to leave her to cool her heels in a state apartment, while he is breakfasting with an opera singer in a public garden. Anecdotes like these (for it would be no difficult a task to add to the catalogue of indecent folly) induced the prince de Ligne, who is an enthusiastic admirer of England, to say in my hearing, *J'avoue qu'il y a plus de talens en Angleterre, que dans tout le reste de l'Europe, cependant je nai gueres vie de ministre Anglais avec du sens commun.*

The manner in which our affairs were conducted at Genoa and Florence, at Munich and Berne would have disgraced the understanding of a Hottentot. Prodigality without even the chance of an adequate return; the most insulting language that pride could employ, unsupported by vigorous exertion; the most atrocious attempts combined with the most contemptible folly: such is the disgraceful history of our foreign policy for many a year.

So long as he is engaged in hostilities with Great Britain, it is for the interest of Bonaparte to find occupation for his armies in a conti-



mental war. This has a double advantage. In the first place, it provides for the support of a large portion of his troops without any additional burthen to France; and in the second, it affords a plausible excuse for delaying the invasion of England. But from the moment that he terminates the contest with this country, his position materially changes, and it then becomes his wisest policy to remain in repose. For the comforts and wishes of all the continental powers he has manifested an indifference which must arise from contempt, but his hatred toward England shews how much he admires her. He knows that a high-minded people will never tamely endure to remain tranquil spectators of his usurpations, and therefore, that if he desires to continue with us on amicable terms, he must learn the useful lesson of forbearance.

But even admitting him to be as ambitious as the Macedonian hero, he has done enough to be satiated with military fame, and it is no paradox to infer that at the return of tranquillity he may direct his active genius to works of more lasting renown. Could he restore commerce and manufactures to his impoverished empire, now prepared to receive them with open arms, since all ridiculous prejudices respecting mercantile degradation are for ever



extinguished, he would deservedly merit the appellation of GREAT.\* It would be an emulation worthy of an elevated mind, to strive with Great Britain for the palm of superiority in every useful art ; in the improvements of agriculture, the simplification of machinery, the discoveries of science, in the decoration of her buildings, the strength and beauty of her bridges, the excellence of her roads, and the extent and contrivance of her inland navigation. This is a field for enterprize which nations may enter with the assurance of gain, where it is glorious to conquer, honourable to contend, and neither disgraceful nor ruinous to be outdone.

But even supposing his mind to be so bent on war, that he disdains as inglorious all the occupations of peace, I must again repeat, that a cessation of hostilities, were it only to continue for five or six years, is "a consummation devoutly to be wished." We ought never to forget that the destiny of France depends, in great measure, on the life of a single man. For we may fairly infer, from recent events, that when left entirely to their own discretion his generals cease to be infallible. Had Napoleon been near enough to have directed

\* We have his own express declaration in favour of this assertion : " ships, colonies and commerce is all I want, and there I am determined to possess."

the operations of the campaign, it is highly probable that not a single man of Lord Wellington's army would have escaped. This consideration holds out to the world the promise of better times. Many of the present generation may live to see the glorious day when the emancipation of Europe will be again effected. To accomplish this it is perfectly indifferent whether the descendants of Joseph, or those of Ferdinand, reign over the peninsula of Spain, provided the kingdom be left entire; and for this reason, the union of Portugal with her sister crown, ought rather to be promoted, than dreaded. In the present distracted situation of the world, the soundest policy which England can pursue, is so far to wink at the usurpations of France, as to consent to her extending her tributary kingdoms, provided it be not at the expence of Austria. It would be far better for us to have the whole of Italy consolidated under the dominion of Murat, or Beauharnois, than frittered out into a variety of little states; and I should hail the day, when the iron crown was placed on the head of either, with an independent jurisdiction from the foot of the Alps to the Straits of Messina.

Considering the destiny of Spain to be irretrievably fixed, by the battle of Ocana, let us endeavour to anticipate the projects of Bona-

parte, should war be prolonged. Every thing seems prepared for the invasion of Turkey, in the plunder of which the policy of the conqueror will allow Russia, and even Austria, to share. There are men so unaccountably pious, that they consider with transport, as the most glorious triumph of the christian faith, the fortunate moment when the long-degraded cross shall again tower on the dome of St. Sophia. And it is far from impossible that a similar feeling may influence the opinions of a minister who rose to power by a cry so senseless, that it would have degraded the bigotry of a Dominican friar, even before the revival of letters. Is it not thus that a statesman will view the subject? He will discern at once the danger that must arise from leaving all the coast of Europe from the Dardanelles to the Elbe, in the hands of France. From the former pretensions of the representative of Charlemagne, he will estimate the claims which his vanity may urge, when seated on the throne of Macedonia. The city of Alexander and the whole empire of the Ptolemies, will belong to him of course, as a necessary consequence of his usurpation, and should the modern Darius presume to dispute his right to the crown of Persia, he may probably furnish, with his disconsolate family, a melancholy subject for a series of pictures to some

modern Lebrun. The conquest of India was, to my certain knowledge, contemplated as possible by the daring ambition of Napoleon, during the summer which elapsed between the convention of Leoben and the treaty of Campo Formio; and should he undertake it from Egypt, with all the vast resources which victory has given him, it is much to be feared that he will not limit his conquests, like his Macedonian predecessor, to the banks of the Indus. Let the mercantile sovereigns of Leadenhall Street ponder well the ruin that awaits them, before they venture to give another vote for the continuance of the war.

With what insolent joy will the pretended restorer of Grecian liberty issue bulletins from Athens, Thebes, or Sparta! and fancy that he combines in his own *sacred* person all the united excellences of Pericles, Agesilaus, and Epaminondas. These perhaps are the triumphs of a pardonable vanity: would to God we had no other triumphs to fear! From the wrecks of anarchy what gigantic strength may eventually arise! Could we even bring our minds to behold with indifference the subjugation of Europe, to see all the islands of the Archipelago, the fertile peninsula of the Morea, the spacious and valuable provinces of Asia Minor, and the still more fertile banks of the Nile, added to the colossal



power of France; it is hardly possible for us to contemplate the uncertain destiny of Spanish America with equal apathy.

Neither are the mismanagement and error so fatally conspicuous in our internal situation less a subject of melancholy reflection: We are told indeed that the high price of provisions is a most striking proof of prosperity, and proceeds entirely from superfluity of wealth, and not from the depreciation of paper currency or the difficulty of procuring them: We may hear also (since nothing is too absurd for party to propagate) that those who purchase guineas at an advanced price, are either persons disaffected to the government, or agents employed by our formidable foe to destroy our national credit. Such a destructive system of malice and folly might have been resorted to by men, who hoped to ruin a mighty nation by a sack-full of false assignats, and to compel Bonaparte to unconditional submission by issuing the orders of council. But it is not thus that Napoleon acts. He unfortunately plays a more certain game, and never strikes at random.

We have already far exceeded the bounds of calculation as prescribed by all speculative writers, but if we pertinaciously persevere in the same prodigal system, sooner or later, the moment must arrive, when it will be no longer practicable, even for the most dextrous finan-

cier to find the means of raising additional supplies. Even now it seems doubtful, whether we are not arrived at the maximum of taxation; so that every additional impost must of necessity occasion a proportionate defalcation in some existing tax. We should compare the amount of our poor-rates before the commencement of the war, with the enormous sum to which they have actually risen, if we wish fairly to appreciate the prosperity of the nation.

We should consider what was the usual rate of wages for the labouring classes of society, in 1790 and what they are in 1809, and observe whether the nominal increase of money has kept pace with the enormous advancement in the price of every article of necessity or convenience.

It was the wish of Henry IV. of France, that every peasant in his kingdom should have a fowl for dinner on Sunday. This patriotic prayer, I apprehend, is at present more nearly realised in France, than in any other country in Europe; and this too in the midst of a war, which has disgraced, or impoverished all the other belligerents. Ministerial ingenuity may possibly be able to trace in the midst of abundance striking symptoms of poverty; would to God I could discover any such symptoms of poverty here! and that no stronger marks could

be found of national distress, than what proceed from plentiful markets !

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Since writing the above, a report has prevailed that fresh proposals have arrived for a treaty. Should this be the case, may they be met with a spirit truly conciliatory, and speedily terminate in peace ! Could that important blessing be obtained, the conditions ought to be regarded as a secondary consideration, provided no concessions are made in the smallest degree derogatory to national honour. Let peace be established only on as solid a foundation as it has usually been with the Bourbon kings, and a wise administration might yet retrieve the calamities occasioned by war, provided they had integrity and courage to face the danger like men. The paramount object which must engage their attention, would necessarily be to support the tottering credit of the nation, and to give fresh life and energy to its decaying constitution ; and these important objects can be alone obtained by conciliating the affections of the Irish catholics by the equalization of all civil rights ; by introducing economy into every branch of the public expenditure ; and by removing those abuses which gradually undermine the glorious fabric of our constitution.

Having already touched upon the question of catholic emancipation, I shall confine my-

self entirely to a few hasty remarks respecting the necessity of economy and reform.

It is evident that in the embarrassed state of our finances, all useless expences should be curtailed. I mean not to recommend that ill-judged parsimony which M. Neckar affected with pedantic ostentation, (and which consisted in robbing the poor and unprotected of the scanty recompense of meritorious service, while he left the high-born peculator to fatten on the spoils of a plundered nation) but gradual and temperate ameliorations, which progressively improve the national revenue without injuring the fortune of any man. Measures resorted to from prudential motives, ought never to be founded in injustice; which would be the case, were their operations to be made retrospective. Let the possessor of a pension, however undeserving of public encouragement, enjoy it for life; but never in future let the earnings of industry be lavished on the tools of a profligate administration as the wages of servility, or the reward of political apostacy.

The calamities occasioned in a neighbouring country by the crimes of bold and profligate leaders, (and which have been so eloquently painted by the genius of an orator, whose transcendant abilities were originally consecrated to the defence of freedom,) by creating an almost universal alarm, rallied the soundest



friends of constitutional liberty around the standard of prerogative. An imagination vivid as that of Mr. Burke was formed by nature, not only to catch fire with facility from the smallest spark, but to communicate the flame with electric rapidity to all who approached him.

Perhaps the most fatal consequence of the French revolution, is the terror which it has inspired for every thing bordering on innovation. For this reason it has operated in disfavour of general liberty in an almost incalculable degree, by inducing moderate men to unite with the partizans of arbitrary power, in supporting the ancient fabric of corruption; rather than hazard (as they erroneously term it) the existence of the constitution in pursuit of a chimerical good.

The situation of this country is so widely different from that of France, that no rational parallel can be drawn. I mean neither to defend the parties concerned, nor the principles upon which they acted. But it was natural to expect, that when all the landed property was abandoned to be scrambled for by the people, men of enterprizing crimes would seize it, and endeavour by every means that iniquity could supply, to prevent the return of the owners. *Our* path is direct, and plain, and requires only to be trodden with caution. Fortunately the delusion, which so long prevailed,

begins to abate.\* Men venture once more to consult their understandings, and even to acknowledge that there are errors in the most perfect fabric of human polity, which prudence might be able to correct. Let the example of France prevent us from listening to political quacks, or indulging in speculative theories; but let it not deter us from adopting such remedies as the exigency of the times may require. The constitution of England was transmitted to us by our ancestors, not to be gazed on, like a canonised relic, with mute and idolatrous worship, but as an useful inheritance to be surrendered to posterity in a flourishing and improved condition.

\* This has been gloriously demonstrated by the election of Lord Grenville to the highest dignity which the University of Oxford can confer. The decision of the contest ought, for this reason, to be regarded as a national triumph, for it is the triumph of reason, of public spirit, and of toleration, over prejudice, cabal, and bigotry.

THE END.

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